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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to address the problem of middle school students reacting to and handling conflict situations with violent behavior in an urban environment. These responses affected the well-being and safety of all middle school students at the school. The major goal was for middle school students to increase their awareness of conflicts as a natural part of daily life and resolve them without violence through problem-solving skills. The participants were 60 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. The following tools were developed for this practicum: (1) student questionnaire; (2) thirty-two interactive classes for middle school students; (3) teacher survey; (4) direct observation checklist; (5) appropriate handouts; and (6) a two-session workshop for educators and parents on conflict management and prosocial skills. Analysis of the data demonstrated that the middle school students became more aware of conflict management skills during a conflict situation and were able to resolve conflict without violence through problem-solving strategies. Additionally there was a decrease in confrontational behavior during incidences of potential disruption. Eight tables are included, as well as the following appendices: student questionnaire; teacher survey; direct observation checklist; pre- and post-test questionnaire (student); pre- and post-test questionnaire (teacher); pre- and post-direct observation checklist. Contains 49 references. (JBJ)

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ED 388 921

Reducing the Incidences of Violence on or by Middle School Students Through Development and Implementation of a Prosocial Skills/ Conflict Management Program

By

Faye Abood

Cluster 56

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A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1995

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This practicum report was submitted by Faye Abood under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

August 1, 1995

Date of Final Approval of Report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS iv

LIST OF TABLES. vi

ABSTRACT. vii

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION 2

Description of Community 2
Description of Writer's Role and Work Setting. 3

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM 4

Problem Description 4
Problem Documentation 5
Causative Analysis 16
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature 19

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS 25

Goals and Expectations 25
Expected Outcomes 25
Measurement of Outcomes 29

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY 32

Discussion of Possible Solutions. . 32
Evaluation of Possible Solutions. . 32
Description of Selected Solution. . 36
Report of Action Taken 41
Unexpected Events and Roadblocks. . 62

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS. 67

Results 67
Discussion 77
Recommendations 88
Dissemination 91

REFERENCES 95

Appendices

A PRELIMINARY STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE 102

B PRELIMINARY TEACHER SURVEY 104

C PRELIMINARY DIRECT OBSERVATION CHECKLIST . . . 106

D PRE AND POST TEST QUESTIONNAIRE - STUDENT. . . 108

E PRE- AND POST TEST QUESTIONNAIRE - TEACHER . . 110

F PRE- AND POST DIRECT OBSERVATION CHECKLIST . . 112

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Item 1: Student responses 71
2. Item 2: Student responses 71
3. Item 3: Student responses 72
4. Item 4: Student responses 73
5. Item 5: Student responses 74
6. Item 1: Teacher responses 75
7. Item 2: Teacher responses 75
8. Item 3: Teacher responses 76
9. Item 4: Teacher responses 77

ABSTRACT

Reducing the Incidences of Violence on or by Middle School Students Through Development and Implementation of a Prosocial Skills/Conflict Management Program. Abood, Faye, 1995; Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Conflict Management/Prosocial Skills/Problem Solving/Urban Middle School.

The design of this practicum was to address the problem of middle school students reacting to and handling conflict situations with violent behavior. These responses affected the well-being and safety of all middle school students at the school.

The major goal of this practicum was for middle school students to increase their awareness of conflicts as a natural part of daily life and resolve them without violence through problem-solving situations.

The writer developed the following tools for this practicum: (1) student questionnaire; (2) thirty-two interactive classes for middle school students; (3) teacher survey; (4) direct observation checklist; (5) appropriate handouts; and a (6) two-session workshop for educators and parents on conflict management and prosocial skills.

Analysis of the data demonstrated that the middle school students became more aware of conflict management skills during a conflict situation and were able to resolve conflict without violence through problem-solving strategies. Additionally, there was a decrease in confrontational behavior during incidences of potential disruption.

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Faye Abood — Faye Abood

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The community where this practicum took place was a middle school located in a large metropolitan district of 1,600,000. Large city problems existed: slums; poverty; gangs; and crimes. Unemployment was common among much of the city's population due to their limited work skills coupled with their minimal education. The school's population was declining with more people moving to safer, upscale suburbs. Two adjacent buildings accommodated the middle school students as well as the elementary students. The preschool students were in a separate building, which was in close proximity to the other two buildings. The school included three preschools, two kindergartens, and three classrooms for each grade at the elementary and middle school level.

The students involved were sixth, seventh and eighth graders of which 60% were Caucasian while 40% were of a minority race. The students, as a whole, were representative of the community in relation to parents' specific characteristics such as race, occupation, education and income. Approximately 60 middle school students were involved: 21 students in the sixth grade; 22 students in the

seventh grade class; and 17 students in the eighth grade. Most students were age appropriate for their grade levels. All the students in the eighth grade transferred to other schools, located in various parts of the city, upon graduating from eighth grade.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is a therapist in a private practice that also includes a physician and four other therapists. The writer's role is to work with children and parents who are referred by the court system, Human Services, and other referral sources. As a therapist, the writer's counseling interests focus on divorce, abuse and co-dependency issues. The writer is also a consultant and a member of the advisory council for a residential care facility for children and adolescents. As a consultant, the writer confers with social workers and other stakeholders on the planning, implementation, and education of community programs. Being a child advocate, the writer's responsibilities also include maintaining contact with representatives of the school, correctional, and welfare systems. The writer is a member of the Child Assault Prevention Project, teaching self-defense strategies to children, helping them to recognize and effectively deal with potentially dangerous situations.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The writer acknowledges that middle school students at an urban middle school reacted to and handled conflict situations with violent behavior. Moreover, their peers often compounded the problem by encouraging the escalation of violent responses in conflict situations. These responses affected the well-being and safety of all middle school students at the school.

When observing these middle school students, the writer noticed students reacted with disruptive and confrontational behavior when faced with a number of types of conflict, such as name-calling, teasing, touching, insults, putdowns, criticism and petty theft. The student's response closely mirrored the type of conflict initiated: for example, a stare was followed by a stare. Usually, his/her peers joined in the confrontation by provoking additional fight-arousing responses.

These responses were learned as sixth graders emulated the seventh and eighth grade students. Being adolescents who were developmentally impulsive and had a desire to be accepted, sixth graders learned the scripts of behavior patterns for carrying out aggression and violence by

experiencing various scenarios acted out by seventh and eighth graders. Being in close proximity within the school provided the environment for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders to witness violent responses as the only way to solve interpersonal problems. Additionally these sixth, seventh and eighth graders often felt impervious to danger. Not only were they learning how to carry out violence, but what it could be used for, how it could solve problems, how they could vent their frustrations, and how they could obtain things they did not have that they might want.

Educators in this school community had not incorporated into their curriculum a practical prosocial skills/conflict management program. Because of this lack of a pro-active program, students were more likely to react with ineffective and violent responses. Modeling of reconciliation patterns were non-existent.

Therefore, students had not learned any alternative methods to deal with conflict situations other than their initial violent reactions. In brief, the problem was that middle school students often utilized violent reactions in conflict situations.

Problem Documentation

Evidence of the problem was based on preliminary student questionnaires, preliminary teacher surveys, and the

writer's direct observations. Prior to intervention, questionnaires were administered to gather information about the current state of conflict resolution. In 60 individual questionnaires (see Appendix A), given to sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students, 50 students acknowledged that disagreements are oftentimes met with fighting and threats at school.

Questions 1, 4, 6, and 7 asked students about their knowledge or witnessing of unsafe or threatened behaviors. Specifically, question 1 asked students if they had seen any fights in their school in the past year. Fifty of the 60 students responded positively to this question. Question 4 asked students if other students had teased or called them names in the past year. Thirty-seven of the 60 students said "yes" to this question. Forty-two of the 60 students responded "yes" to question 6 which asked if they felt their school's environment was unsafe. Question 7 asked the students if they knew of any student who owned a gun. Forty-five of the 60 students responded "yes."

Questions 2, 3, 5, asked students about their own involvement in unsafe or threatened situations. Specifically, question 2 asked students if they had been involved in any fights this past year. Thirty-five of the 60 students responded "yes." Forty of the 60 students answered "yes" to question 3 which asked if they had teased or called other students names in school during the past

year. Question 5 asked the students if they had been involved in a situation which had made them feel they wanted to fight another student in their school. Twenty of 60 students responded "yes" to this question.

Questions 1 through 7 discussed students' knowledge or involvement in threatening or violent situations in their school in the past year. Positive responses to these questions indicated that students were exposed to conflict at some level in their schools. For questions 1 through 7 there were 269 "yes" responses and 151 "no" responses. This indicated that a high number of students felt threatened or were involved in some type of conflict in their schools in the past year.

Questions 8 through 14 asked students about their awareness of conflict resolution behaviors. Positive responses to these questions would indicate that students knew how to deal with threatening situations. Question 8 queried students specifically if they could describe feelings in various situations. This question required students to understand their own feelings. Thirty-one of 60 students responded "yes" to this question. Question 9 asked if students could demonstrate positive listening skills. This required the student to know what these skills were and to show someone how they would be applied in a conflict situation. Only 22 of the 60 students responded "yes" to this question. In question 10, students were required to

understand the steps to conflict resolution and to be able to explain them. Twenty of 60 students responded "yes" to this question. Question 11 required students to identify their feelings toward responses to other students. Only 18 of the 60 students responded positively to this question. Twenty-nine of the 60 students responded "yes" to question 12 which asked them if they could recognize other students non-verbal messages. Question 13 asked students if they were able to demonstrate the steps to reach a positive solution in a disagreement. Twenty-one of 60 students responded "yes" to this question. In question 14, students were asked if they could identify outlets for stress. Twenty-three of 60 students responded positively.

Questions 8 through 14 dealt specifically with knowledge and actions of students relating to stressful situations. Only 164 positive responses were recorded for these questions. Moreover, 316 negative responses indicated that few students had the knowledge or skills to satisfactorily resolve conflict situations in which they might be involved.

The results of this preliminary student questionnaire were used for two purposes: the first purpose was to discover if a conflict management program was necessary in the school; the second purpose was to assist in the design of a useful intervention program. Additionally, the questions pointed out specific areas in which the students

needed help: for example, understanding the steps to conflict and resolution, learning to discuss their own feelings, and recognizing non-verbal messages of other students.

Table 1 lists the results of the preliminary student questionnaire (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

RESULTS OF THE PRELIMINARY STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

ITEM	STATEMENT	NUMBER OF STUDENTS RESPONDING YES	NO
		YES	NO
1.	Have you seen any fights/violent altercations in your school during the past year?	50	10
2.	Have you been involved in any fights this year?	35	25
3.	Have you ever teased, put down or called any student names in your school this year?	40	20
4.	Were your teased, put down or called names by any student this year?	37	23
5.	Were you in a situation that you wanted to fight someone who called you names in your school this year?	20	40
6.	Do you think your school's environment is unsafe?	42	18
7.	Do you know of any student who owns a gun?	45	15
8.	Could you describe 5 basic feelings across various situations?	31	29
9.	Could you demonstrate positive listening skills?	22	38

TABLE 1 CONTINUED.

RESULTS OF THE PRELIMINARY STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

ITEM	STATEMENT	NUMBER OF STUDENTS RESPONDING YES	NO
10.	Could you state the steps to conflict resolution?	20	40
11.	Could you identify the expression of feelings and responding to others?	18	42
12.	Could you recognize the nonverbal message of others?	29	31
13.	Could you demonstrate the steps to use in reaching a positive solution to a disagreement?	21	39
14.	Could you identify outlets for stress?	23	37

In 25 preliminary teacher surveys (see Appendix B), 20 teachers stated that they had seen violent responses to conflict situations daily.

Questions 1, 4, 9, 10, and 12 asked teachers about their awareness of conflict resolution skills and their feelings about the appropriateness of an intervention program to help students and teachers deal with threatening situations.

Question 1 asked the teachers if they felt an intervention program would teach students the skills that were needed to better deal with conflict. All 25 of the teachers responded positively.

Question 4 asked if teachers were aware of the reasons students fight. Only 10 of the 25 teachers responded "yes" to this question.

Question 9 asked the teachers if they knew the steps to conflict resolution. Again, 10 of the 25 teachers responded "yes."

In question 12, teachers were asked if they were able to apply conflict management skills. Only 9 of the 25 teachers responded that they could apply these skills.

The responses to these five questions indicated that teachers did not have the knowledge and skills to help students resolve their conflicts peacefully. There was a total of 73 positive responses to these questions and 52 negative responses.

Questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 dealt with specific incidences teachers had experienced or witnessed in the middle school.

Question 2 queried teachers if they had successfully prevented conflicts from occurring. Ten of 25 teachers responded "yes."

Question 3 asked the teachers if fights could be prevented. Twenty of the 25 teachers felt that fights could be prevented from occurring.

Question 5 queried the teachers if they had seen fights which were not peacefully resolved in the past year. Twenty of the 25 teachers responded "yes."

Question 6 asked the teachers if they felt there was a disciplinary problem in their schools. All 25 teachers responded positively.

Question 7 asked the teachers if they felt their schools' environment was unsafe. Twenty-three of the 25 said "yes."

In question 8, teachers were asked if they had seen students encouraging disputes to continue. Again 23 of 25 teachers said "yes."

Question 11 addressed the occurrence of materials which might encourage the escalation of conflicts between students belonging to different racial, ethnic, religious or gender groups. Twenty-three of 25 teachers responded that some of this type of material could be found in their classrooms.

The responses to these seven questions indicated that teachers felt there were conflicts and potentially threatening situations in the middle school. Additionally, teachers did not feel they had the skills necessary to defuse these harmful situations. There were 144 positive responses to these questions and only 31 negative responses.

Table 2 lists the results of the preliminary teacher survey (see Table 2 on the following page).

TABLE 2

RESULTS OF THE PRELIMINARY TEACHER SURVEY

ITEM	STATEMENT	NUMBER OF TEACHERS RESPONDING YES	NO
	SURVEY	YES	NO
1.	Do you think implementing a prosocial skills/conflict management program would teach students necessary skills to deal with conflict?	25	0
2.	Have you had success as a teacher in preventing conflict situations from occurring?	10	15
3.	Can fights be prevented from occurring?	20	5
4.	Do you know the underlying reasons why students fight?	17	8
5.	Have you seen any fights/violent altercations in your school during the past year that were not resolved peaceably?	20	5
6.	Do you think you have a disciplinary problem in your school, in your classroom?	25	0
7.	Do you feel that your school's environment is unsafe?	23	2
8.	Did you observe the students' peer group encouraging a dispute to continue?	23	2
9.	Could you demonstrate the steps to conflict resolution?	10	15
10.	Could you identify positive listening skills?	12	13
11.	Are there any appropriate, out-of-date and/or stereotypical materials in your classroom that relate to sex, race, religion and ethnic background?	23	2
12.	Could you apply conflict management skills individually and within a group process?	9	16

Based on the writer's observation of students' behavior, it appeared that students were engaging in violent and threatening situations. Additionally, other students appeared to encourage the continuation of disputes instead of trying to help resolve them. The writer felt that students were unaware of the negative effects of their conflicts and were also unable to react in a positive manner to these situations.

Based on the results of the preliminary student questionnaires, the preliminary teacher surveys and the writer's observations, it was felt that an intervention program designed to assist middle school students through a prosocial skills/conflict management program would be useful in reducing the students' violent responses in problem-solving situations.

Table 3 lists the results of the preliminary direct observation checklist (see Table 3 on the following page.)

TABLE 3

RESULTS OF THE PRELIMINARY DIRECT OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

ITEM	STATEMENT	RESPONSES YES	NO
	INFORMAL CHECKLIST	YES	NO
1.	Are there conflict situations on the school grounds that result in an escalation of violence?	X	
2.	Have you observed situations where teasing, putting down and/or threatening of students by other students were occurring?	X	
3.	Do students resort to settling disputes with fights and/or threats?	X	
4.	Do peers often encourage the disputants' fighting?	X	
5.	Do you feel that students often tease other students because of their sex, race, religious or ethnic background?	X	
6.	Do you think that there's a lack of students awareness concerning available resources and support systems?	X	

Causative Analysis

The causes of the problem were manifold. Students suffered from parental neglect, poor parental support and monitoring. There was often the absence of parents who could help stimulate their adolescent's development by providing a warm, supportive environment (Smilansky, 1992). The adolescents were able to make choices on their own but still lacked clear, firm guidelines and the assurances that adults were modeling a responsible lifestyle (Zill, 1983; Amato, 1993).

Many students came from a low socioeconomic background, where the emotional and financial burdens often seemed insurmountable. These causes seemed to impact the adolescents' motives and attitudes toward violence, which then escalated into the greater culture around them. Therefore, the social causes of violence needed to be examined. Eron (1987) contended that violence was a learned behavior. The biological, psychological, sociological, macro-economic and social conditions all contributed to aggressive and violent behavior (Eron, 1987).

Also students have learned that violent measures (scripts) often modeled by the adults of the community, were the only ways to deal with conflict. Unfortunately, adolescents also observed and learned patterns of parental dysfunctional behavior, dealing with conflict by arguing,

hitting, and being abusive. Moreover, violent responses to problem-solving situations would then be passed on from one generation to the next until one saw the need to break the cycle of violence and aggression (Dryfoos, 1990). Often, the adolescent, when confronted with the overwhelming complexities of the world, would respond impulsively and indecisively. Society along with culture has taught the adolescent that violence is the only way to solve interpersonal problems. It was not unusual for adolescents to have witnessed violence due to domestic spousal abuse or gang-related violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991). Learning the scripts of behavior patterns for carrying out aggression and violence by experiencing various scenarios in our society impacted the impulsive adolescents who, oftentimes, felt impervious to danger.

Additionally, peer pressure often encouraged the escalation of disagreements. The typical developmental period of adolescence needed to be understood for the purpose of discovering the attitudes and motives that motivated some teenagers to commit violent responses. Developmentally, middle schoolers had a strong need to be accepted by peers and were often admired for their aggression. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) indicated that peers were often the most important determinant of the adolescent's behavior. There was a vital link between the

adolescent and his peer group as he sought intimacy and interaction among these friendships and their influence on his behavior and attitudes. The adolescent sought support and acceptance and, at the same time, revealed an intensity of friendship within his peer group conforming to the group's dynamics.

Moreover, media glorification of violence produced violent reactions in conflict situations. In other words, an adolescent sought to accurately mimic the reality that he perceived in his environment. Unfortunately, TV violence for years has portrayed drive-by shootings and car jackings. Glorification and an appetite for destruction were becoming substitutes for feelings and thoughts among adolescents (Medved, 1992). Eron and Huesman (1974) devised a study to examine the effects of children's exposure to violent acts from the mass media. Results of their data revealed that exposure to all violent acts, whether from TV, videos, or music, had a detrimental impact on our youth; this exposure "negatively affects youngsters of all ages, of both genders, at all socioeconomic levels and all levels of intelligence ... It cannot be denied or explained away" (Eron & Huesman, 1974, p. 347).

Finally, support services and resources to provide relevant information regarding these critical issues were either insufficient or unavailable to parents as well as

educators. In addition, the writer found that there were inconsistencies and limitations in the accuracy of previous prevention programs because of one-time school presentations, mass distribution of non-explicit literature, and basic classes were ineffective. Therefore, the writer recognized that there was a lack of collaborative efforts from families, schools, communities and government. Utilizing these resources could have positive ramifications towards reducing violence among middle school students significantly.

While the writer could not change a student's parental situation, socioeconomic conditions, or influence of peer pressure, the writer could address the ways students dealt with conflict and peer pressure, as well as make more resources available to the school community.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The professional literature reveals and acknowledges the significance of the conflict and violence problem, as well as its consequences (Dworetzky, 1991; Forman, 1993; Forman & Linney, 1991; & Macionis, 1989). Adolescents as well as adults communicate ineffectively because they do not have an awareness of emotions outside of their own and the needs and wants in a relationship were not clearly

defined (Fisher & Brown, 1989).

The connection between children's exposure to family violence and violent behavior in the teen and adult years has been addressed in the literature. Single-parenting maximizes the possibility of anti-social behavior for boys at-risk (Zill, 1983). In addition, the remote parent could cause low self-esteem and feelings of unworthiness within his/her child (Smilansky, 1992). According to Curran (1983), adolescents are often impacted by a negative nonverbal message of the parents, which was often silence. This expression sends a message ranging from boredom to total antagonism.

The severity of conflicts between the parents, which is inadvertently experienced by the child, is often in direct proportion to the degree that the child was impacted (Amato, 1993). Dysfunctional families tend to utilize two negative strategies of conflict resolution, power and permissiveness, while omitting the positive techniques of cooperation (Bluestein, 1988). Economic hardships of the family coupled with the limited exposure to resources and support systems often results in the child's acting out: being unmotivated in school, engaging in sexual activity, and becoming involved in delinquent behavior (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

A review of the literature reveals the alarming dimensions of the problem. Epidemiological studies

carried out by the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention (1993), found that violence is the leading cause of death among African-American males (ages 15-34) and the third leading cause of death among male Caucasians (National Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 1993). The American Psychological Association's Commission on Violence and Youth recently released a report on youth violence: The number of teenagers arrested for murder jumped 85 percent from 1987 to 1991 (American Psychological Association, 1993). Teenagers are 2 1/2 times more likely to be violent crime victims than people over the age of 20 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991). Violent crime is responsible for more inner-city adolescents' deaths than cancer, diabetes and heart disease combined (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991). Since 1989, dying from a firearm increased 77% according to the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention (National Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 1993). The national survey reported more than 2,000 youths (under 18) were killed by firearms in 1992, and the rates for 1993 were still being counted (National Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 1993).

In parallel findings, the Journal of the American Medical Association published a study which indicated that 3/4 of all homicides of young males were a result of firearms (Fingerhut & Kleinman, 1990). Dryfoos (1990)

supported these findings with additional data concerning sex-rate differences in homicide rates, which indicates that black male teens have a 5 to 6 times higher risk of dying from homicide than white male teens; comparatively, black female teens were 2 to 3 times more at risk of dying from homicide than white female teens (Dryfoos, 1990). An inexorable rise in the rate of gun-related violence correlates with the escalating rise in the sale of guns (Morash, 1989).

Evidence shows that 55 percent of all arrests among teenagers involves alcohol consumption (Taft, 1993). Drug use (alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine) is becoming normative among adolescents, cutting across all racial, ethnic and social lines with higher quantities being ingested and at earlier initiation (Prothrow-Stith, 1991; Mirsky & Siegel, 1990; Taft, 1993).

The exposure to episodes of violence places the adolescent at risk for a permanent post-traumatic stresslike syndrome; the latter condition reduces psychological and cognitive performance and greatly impaired future thinking and development (Eitzen & Zinn, 1991). The American Psychological Association estimates that 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence would be viewed by the average child before he completes elementary school (American Psychological Association, 1993).

In the last five years, violent acts by juveniles

have increased 124% (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993). Annually, young people, ages 12-19 are victims in 1.9 million violent assaults in addition to 3.3 million thefts (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991).

The literature reveals a number of causes that contribute to the use of violent behavior to solve inner-personal problems. Leonard Eron (1987), Chair of Commission on Youth and Violence, contends that what contributes to violent and aggressive behavior are the "biological, psychological, sociological, macro-economic and social conditions" (Eron, 1987, p. 3). Farrington (1991b) reports that an adolescent is impacted by the family and society into which he was born, along with other factors such as: 1) parental neglect; 2) poor parental monitoring; 3) lack of parental support; and 4) discord in the family. Feldman notes (1987) that parents often model negatively a generational transference of violent responses to problem-solving situations. Reiss and Roth (1993) acknowledge other components that influence a propensity toward violent reactions in problem-solving situations: 1) low socio-economic conditions; 2) large families; 3) crime ridden community; 4) poor parental modeling in conflict situations.

Adolescents are learning to solve problems with violence through a myriad of exposures to aggression and violence in the areas of:

1) family (parents, caretakers, relatives);

2) guns (means);

3) everyday life (violent street-crime, gangs);

4) drugs; and

5) media (TV, videos, movies, music)

(Dryfoos, 1990; McKinney & Moore, 1982; Prothrow-Stith, 1991; Shapiro, 1993; Taylor, 1990; American Psychological Association, 1993; Medved, 1992).

Society as a whole is facing a disruption in its social order due to the impact of increased violence and crime; specific areas impacted were business, health industry, media, education and politics (Hechinger, 1992; Molnar, 1992; Lawton, 1991; Burke, 1991; & Morash, 1989).

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum was to increase the students' awareness of conflicts as a natural part of daily life and thus enabled students to resolve them without violence through problem-solving strategies.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were expected as a result of the implementation of the prosocial skills/conflict management program:

1. At least 50 of the 60 students would be able to list five basic feelings across various situations as indicated on the student post-test (see Appendix D) by correctly completing item 1.
2. At least 50 of the 60 students would demonstrate a knowledge of positive listening skills as indicated on the student post-test (see Appendix D) by correctly listing five of these skills in response to item 2.
3. At least 55 of the 60 students would understand the steps to conflict resolution by listing correctly four out of five of these steps in

response to item 3 of the student post-test (see Appendix D).

4. At least 55 of the 60 students would demonstrate an understanding of non-verbal messages by correctly listing five such messages in response to item 4 on the student post-test (see Appendix D).

5. At least 50 of the 60 students would correctly identify outlets for stress by listing five of them in response to item 5 on the student post-test (see Appendix D).

It was expected that more students would be able to answer all of the questions correctly on the post-test after participating in the intervention program.

Similarly, the writer expected positive outcomes when teachers' knowledge of prosocial/conflict management skills was measured using the teacher post-test (see Appendix E). Specifically, the following results were expected:

1. It was expected that all 10 of the teachers would have an understanding of the reasons students fight as indicated by their responses to item 1 on the teacher post-test (see Appendix E). The writer expected that all teachers would be able to list three reasons why students fight.

2. All 10 participating teachers would demonstrate an understanding of conflict resolution based on their responses to item 2 on the teacher post-test (see Appendix E) by correctly listing four of the five steps.
3. It was expected that all 10 teachers would be able to correctly list three positive listening skills in response to item 3 on the teacher post-test (see Appendix E).
4. All 10 teachers would demonstrate an understanding of conflict management skills by correctly listing five of these skills in response to item 4 on the teacher post-test (see Appendix E).

It was expected that teachers' awareness of how to deal with conflict resolution would increase after their participation in the intervention program as demonstrated by their measures on the post-tests as compared to their responses on the pre-tests.

Additionally, the writer used a direct observation checklist prior to the start of the intervention program and again at the end of the program. It was expected that the writer would observe fewer incidences of conflict and threatening behavior after the completion of the implementation of the program.

1. The incidences of conflict situations on the school grounds that resulted in an escalation of violence would decrease for 30 of the 60 students as noted by the writer's direct observations in response to item 1 on the observation checklist (see Appendix F).
2. The occurrence of situations of putting down and/or threatening of students by other students would decrease for 35 of the 60 students as noted by the writer's observation in response to item 2 on the direct observation checklist (see Appendix F).
3. The occurrence of students settling disputes with fights and/or threats would decrease for 30 of 60 students based on the direct observation of the writer in response to item 3 on the direct observation checklist (see Appendix F).
4. The incidence of peers encouraging disputants' fighting would decrease for 40 of 60 students as observed by the writer in response to item 4 on the direct observation checklist (see Appendix F).
5. The occurrence of students teasing other students because of sex, race, religious or ethnic background would decrease for 40 of 60 students based on the writer's observation for

item 5 on the direct observation checklist (see Appendix F).

Although the writer expected teachers and students to be more aware of the processes for conflict resolution, the writer felt that some students would still engage in threatening behaviors. Knowledge and awareness were the first steps to changing this behavior. The writer hoped students and teachers would continue to discuss and work on these negative behaviors in the middle school.

Measurement of Outcomes

On the first day of the practicum, the writer would administer a pre-test (see Appendix D) to students and a pre-test (see Appendix E) to teachers. The objective of the pre-tests was to measure the current state of knowledge of students and teachers. The same tests would be administered at the end of the intervention program to measure the amount of change in the knowledge of pro-social/conflict management skills of students and teachers. Additionally, the writer would make observations using a direct observation checklist (see Appendix F) on the first day of the practicum.

The same instruments would be given to students and teachers after the intervention program was completed. Also, the writer would use the checklist to observe directly the students' behavior. It was expected that

students and teachers would have a greater understanding of conflict resolution skills as demonstrated by higher scores on the post-tests than on the pre-tests. Also, the writer expected to observe fewer incidences of threatening behaviors after the program than before.

Student pre- and post tests, teacher pre- and post tests, and a direct observation checklist were the evaluation tools used to measure these expected outcomes. Any explanations or clarifications required by the participants concerning these tests were given by the writer. The distribution of the tests was initiated by the writer. During the first week of the practicum, prior to the implementation of the program, the writer administers the pre-tests (see Appendix D and E) to both the students and the teachers. Additionally, the writer made observations as indicated on the direct observation checklist (see Appendix F). The time frame for administering and collecting of the questionnaires was 15 minutes. During the last week of implementation (32 weeks), the post-tests were administered to 60 middle school students and 10 teachers who participated in the prosocial skills/conflict management program. The students' tests focused on conflict issues pertinent to middle schoolers and their awareness of prosocial skills and conflict management techniques. The teachers' tests focused on their awareness of why students fought and how

teachers could assist in conflict resolution.

The writer measured the middle school students' awareness of the above stated concepts by observing and listening to the students' verbalized explanations. The writer recorded the responses on a checklist form (see Appendix F) and noted any significant improvement in the students' behavior and awareness of prosocial skills/conflict management concepts. The time frame for completing the checklist was approximately four hours during random days/times. Finally, any additional input or feedback from the middle school students and/or teachers was recorded and shared with all participants.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Middle school students often utilized violent reactions in conflict situations. Reviewing the literature enabled the writer to reflect on various solutions for consideration.

1. Parent Involvement. It is crucial for parents to reassert their leadership and to provide guidance to their children in order to avoid addictive intoxication to violence (Frenza, 1993; Linden & McFarland, 1993; Rollins & Thomas, 1979; and Zill, 1983). When reconciliation patterns were modeled by parents, it was much easier for adolescents to emulate non-violent resolution of their disputes (Eitzen & Zinn, 1991). Overall, then, adolescents' development is greatly influenced by parental experiences and responses to social problems (Plomin & Foch, 1989; Goldsmith, 1983).

Dryfoos (1990) supports the need (through intervention strategies) to break the cycle of violence and aggression so that violent responses to problem-solving situations will not be passed on from one generation to the next generation. Parents can make a positive difference in the lives of their adolescents by

enhancing their child's self-esteem and utilizing problem-solving skills in parent-child interactions (Berk, 1993; French & Waas, 1985).

2. Psychoeducational curriculum: prosocial skills/conflict management course. Providing students with a prosocial skills/conflict management course can be quite effective in mitigating violent impulses in conflict situations. Educators can share the task of recognizing at-risk students/groups and, in addition, incorporate conflict resolution skills into the curricular program (Bierman, 1986; Mize & Ladd, 1990).

An innovative conflict management program with high educational value is the South Euclid Conflict Mediation Program (Carter, 1992), whose components are: a) to educate students and staff in the dynamics of conflict resolution; and b) promote the problem-solving techniques and skills through the mediation program. Training is provided (through modeling and role-playing) for teaching conflict resolution with skills for resolving conflict and ways to use those skills (Carter, 1992).

Conflict-resolution workshops which develop skills of communication create a climate of a "win-win" situation, and, consequently, are beneficial to all participants to the conflict (Rubin & Brown, 1975; Brett, Goldberg, & Ury, 1990).

Goldstein and his colleagues (1980) describe their

successful social skills training program, called Structured Learning, which teaches adolescents to develop positive social interactions through social problem solving, whose six basic components were: a) social skills, part 1; b) social skills, part 2; c) identification of feelings; d) alternatives to aggression; e) alternatives to stress; and, f) social-problem solving skills (Goldstein, Sprafkin, Gershaw, & Klein, 1980). Of particular attention, according to Goldstein, et. al, (1980) is the teaching of transference of social skills into the student's everyday life.

3. Mass media. Children's exposure to violent acts from the mass media has an enormous negative impact on their behavior. Medved (1992) proposes that mass media, especially radio stations, should become self-censoring toward rap songs that glorify graphic depictions of violence.

Eron and Huesman (1974) reveals in their data results that exposure to all violent acts, whether TV, videos, or music, has a detrimental impact on youth; therefore, they proposed: 1) an action committee whose representatives include members from parents and families, schools, communities, government, and the entertainment industry, which must critique and, if need be, censor the offending media messages, and 2) ongoing evaluation and reporting annually.

4. Community-based programs. Successful reduction of students' violent responses depends on the genuine interaction of not only the schools, but also the parents, communities, and the government.

Although many community-based programs abound, according to John A. Calhoun (1993) Director of the National Crime Prevention Council, a national model program that merits attention is Teens, Crime and Community (TC & C), whose components are: an education and action program for teens that related to them crime's costs, as well as, through interactive methods, how to prevent and protect themselves from being victimized. Furthermore, particular attention is focused on the teenagers' being resources to their school or community, and at the same time, giving them the challenge to help solve a crime-related problem of local relevance (Calhoun, 1993).

5. Legislation. Concerning the aspects of society that need to be reformed, effective legislation could be designed and implemented.

Brannigan and Merens (1993) maintain that punishment given to offenders, in order to be effective, has to be quick, certain, and extreme. The increase of homicides in our communities had citizens clamoring for longer sentences for criminals, more police on the beat, and stricter gun control (Dryfoos, 1990).

Collaborative efforts must now be focused on legislation that is pending: the Brady Law, to control the proliferation of guns; national registration and licensing system for handguns; banning of assault weapons; outlawing of certain types of ammunition; and an omnibus crime bill - "three strikes and you're out" (National Center for Disease Control & Prevention, 1993).

Through collective action, individuals are capable of significantly reducing the rate of violent youth crime by imposing stringent sentences on repeat offenders which would affect the safety and quality of life for us all (Eitzen & Zinn, 1991).

Description of Selected Solution

The writer, while considering the solutions revealed by the literature, noted that a prime area of concern of middle schoolers was to receive information on the pro-social skills/conflict management process. Defined by the problems of middle schoolers that the preliminary student questionnaires, preliminary teacher surveys, preliminary direct observations, and the literature uncovered, the writer sought to implement a social skills/conflict management program to meet their needs. Additionally, having reviewed the solutions suggested by the literature, the writer recognized the necessity of developing a pro-

social skills/conflict management program within a middle school setting that would recognize the importance of the role of the parents, the greater community, and mass media.

Moreover, the writer recognized that there were several key components, such as evaluation, that were consistently absent from many programs. Without ongoing evaluations it was nearly impossible to gauge the success or failure of a program. Evaluations, a key component, had to be developed to determine whether the program would be successful and thus would be adopted and replicated. Further important reasons for justification were (a) to identify specific, operationally defined needs of the program; (b) to increase awareness of the effective, specific, operationally defined needs of the program; (c) to identify ineffective specific components of the program; and (d) to increase communication among students/school personnel and the community with regard to the above areas. In addition, the writer found that there were inconsistencies and limitations in the accuracy of prosocial skills/conflict management programs in many schools because of one-time school presentations, mass distributions of non-explicit literature, and basic conflict management classes being ineffective. The writer felt that a prosocial skills program was badly needed to overcome misinformation, personal biases, and reluctance

of the students and teachers to discuss conflicts openly. Moreover, because of budget limitations, many middle schools, in particular this one, did not have a guidance counselor. Finally, teachers were poorly trained in the prosocial skills/conflict management process due to the unavailability of systematic training.

The prosocial skills/conflict management program that the writer advocated encompassed all the key components which would make an intervention program effective: a) awareness of self-esteem; b) identification of feelings; c) social skills/conflict management process; and d) the transference of these skills into the greater community. This program presented a partnership approach that enhanced home, school and community-based efforts.

Therefore, the underlying premise of the prosocial skills/conflict management program would incorporate the organizational tenets of Carter's (1986) handbook in which he focused on the who, what, when, where, why and how of setting up a conflict management program.

The format would be directed toward providing an informative program to meet the needs of middle schoolers' objectional behavior, and increasing the student's capacity to live in a more secure school environment.

First, the writer met with all middle school teachers and administrators to provide a comprehensive overview of the prosocial skills/conflict management program by

discussing the agenda and the activities that would be presented to students and to receive any additional suggestions/input.

The practicum contained two basic components: 1) a model prosocial skills/conflict management program to students and 2) a 2-hour community workshop to educators and parents.

First, using interactive exercises and group process, the writer would focus on four major components of the Prosocial/Conflict Management Program: a) self-esteem; b) identification of feelings; c) social skills/conflict management process; and d) transference of these skills into the greater community. These issues had to be considered the highest priority, according to Forman (1993), in order to prevent violent responses in problem-solving situations. Didactic presentations, videotapes and small group discussions would be utilized to address these issues and to maximize the students' learning of positive social and conflict management skills.

Various role-playing methods would also be demonstrated to teach conflict-management techniques and social skills strategies. Exploring the impact of violence, the middle schoolers would learn coping mechanisms that could be transferred into their community. Pertinent handouts would be provided to enable the participants to increase their understanding of the pro-

social skills/ conflict management process.

Specifically, the program's format would build upon and reinforce newly learned skills and behaviors such as:

1. In month 1, the focus would be on the student's learning self-awareness.
2. In month 2, the students would be working on identifying violence and the students' own triggers to violence;
3. During month 3, the students would be introduced to conflict management and mediation;
4. During month 4, the students would increase their communication skills;
5. In month 5, the students would focus on friendship and peer pressure;
6. In month 6, the students would be utilizing the conflict management skills that they learned;
7. During month 7, the students would be reinforcing conflict management mediation skills through active role playing; and
8. In month 8, the students would be practicing the transference of prosocial skills/conflict management process into their community.

Secondly, a 2-hour conflict management workshop would be provided to educators and administrators in the school system. A pre-and post assessment would be administered to this group at the time of the workshop, which would

measure their knowledge of and confidence with the subject matter of conflict management (see Appendix E).

The implementation of the program also included Demause's (1993) suggestion that conflict management classes should include a list of community resources to decrease the escalation of violent responses to conflict within the family. Fraad (1993) underscored this recommendation when she reported that the advantages of utilizing community resources were that they provided immediate information and served as a source for emotional support.

Because of this program, the writer's intentions were that adolescents would be better equipped to utilize problem-solving skills for resolving conflict and perhaps avoid becoming a statistic.

Report of Action Taken

The steps to implement the Prosocial Skills/Conflict Management Program were a systematic progression designed to be focused pragmatically. During the practicum, there was monthly ongoing evaluation, a final evaluation at the end of the 8-month period, and the institution of a yearly monitoring system.

Month 1, Week 1 The writer initiated the discussion with the students by providing a comprehensive overview of

an interactive prosocial skills/conflict management program. Three guidelines were presented at the beginning concerning the classes: (1) students should listen intently while others are talking; (2) while disagreement is acceptable, students should respect each other's contributions and comments; (3) confidentiality is required, not only on the part of the writer but also the student. These guidelines were listed on a flip chart.

To establish rapport among students, several interactive games were initiated. The instructions to the first game were: A student should throw an apple clockwise while saying his/her own name to another student in the circle (the writer illustrated her response first to explain the rules). Then an orange was introduced, and the students were instructed to throw it counterclockwise, saying their own names while the apple was being tossed clockwise. Following this game, the students were asked to introduce themselves to the person sitting next to them and tell one hobby that they are interested in while the other person listened. After one minute, they were asked to switch roles. Finally, students were asked to report back to the whole group what they had learned about the other person.

The writer then presented to the students the concept of identifying feelings; these various feelings, which were illustrated on the flip chart (by students'

responses), were discussed in depth by all students. Examples of these feelings included love, fear, anger, sadness and happiness. Students also were given handouts, and exercises were done to help reinforce the ideas presented. This explanation of feelings continued through the third session. The writer had referred to Carter (1986) and Frenza (1993) for the topic suggestions for the prosocial skills/conflict management program. Each class period the writer assigned different students for two tasks-keeping time and passing out snacks.

Month 1, Week 2 The writer facilitated intergroup discussion with the students, so that they could explore their strengths and weaknesses; furthermore, the discussion focused on the identification of feelings. The purpose of this exercise was not only to help students identify their own skills and problem areas but also to understand that other people have similar limitations and talents. The writer initiated discussion illustrating that a person's weakness can become positive. Illustrations were provided by the writer of famous people who turned weaknesses into strengths, such as Helen Keller, Franklin Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King. The writer then distributed a handout in which the students identified their own weaknesses. While they completed their responses, the writer stated that these papers would not be handed in, but were to be for

their own use. Additional handouts were distributed, which illustrated ways for students to consider overcoming their weaknesses; this increased awareness was designed to help students recognize their own feelings and be more tolerant of others.

Month 1, Week 3 The writer stated the importance of self-awareness. By focusing on the students' strengths through interactive exercises, the writer increased the students' awareness of their own positive traits. Students then divided into small groups (four to five participants to a group) in which they shared their self-awareness with others. Handouts were given to each student which asked them to recognize their feelings concerning various issues, such as "boys need more education than girls"; "people who are alone are lonely people"; "men should not cry in public"; people on unemployment are lazy" etc. To these statements, the students marked, "strongly agree," "undecided," "disagree," or "strongly disagree." This exercise had several purposes. First, the students would learn how their feelings about certain issues often dictate their actions. Second, the purpose was to increase the interaction among students, so that they would know each other better and possibly reduce conflict among students. Third, the purpose was to increase the self-esteem of these students by making them aware of the positive skills

and abilities they possess. Finally, the students would also become aware of good traits in other students.

Month 1, Week 4 The week began with an emphasis on involving parents and educators in a workshop which focused on the prosocial skills/conflict management program. An overview of the program and its components were discussed during a 2-hour community workshop. Additionally, the writer facilitated the students' role-playing scenarios of the concepts of teamwork/chaos to demonstrate how to work cooperatively and develop the students' leadership skills. The writer asked the students to form groups of five to six participants. Handouts were provided to each group which depicted a potentially conflicting situation, and several alternatives to resolve the problem were suggested. Students were required to reach a consensus regarding the best solution. Next, a spokesperson from each group reported on his/her group's solution. Following these group presentations, a question and answer period ensued on the issue of how to resolve disagreements. This allowed students to listen to each other, understand others' attitudes and feelings, and examine their own responses to conflict situations. Additionally, this exercise enabled students to explore problem-solving options in a less threatening situation because the scenarios depicted the problems of others. Finally, the

writer involved the students in interactive activities, which reviewed the previous weeks' concepts as well as previewed those of the next month.

Month 2, Week 1 The writer defined the critical need of discovering constructive alternatives to frustrating situations, which was illustrated on a flip chart. To address the issue of selecting a better alternative solution, the writer disclosed situations in which she could have made a better choice. The students were asked to state a specific situation in which they were personally involved and wished they could have chosen a different response. Each student then described a specific situation, some of which included holding a gun to his brother's head, threatening his brother with a knife, putting a sparkler on a dog, hitting a teacher, and stealing $20 from his mom's purse. Students then discussed constructive alternative approaches to their particular situations and how to curtail their aggressive feelings and actions. This discussion helped individual students become more aware of how they deal with the frustration of conflict and provided them with constructive alternatives to handle these situations.

Month 2, Week 2 The writer tallied the examples of violence the students had perceived and collected from television during the past week on a flip chart. The students listed incidences of violent acts they had been

exposed to on television. A discussion period followed, which examined the effects of children's exposure to violent acts from the mass media, whether from TV, videos, or music. To address the issue of how adolescents are also constantly inundated as well as affected with viewing violent and murderous acts, a question and answer period (focus on pre-emptive solutions) was facilitated by the writer. The exercise helped students to become aware of how much violence they are exposed to and how it desensitizes them to violent acts in their own lives.

Month 2, Week 3 The writer asked the students to identify the triggers of their own anger and their own feelings/tendencies toward violence by utilizing a flip chart. The students listed clues to recognizing personal anger responses. The students also responded to their experiences of dealing with conflict; their answers were placed under two categories on the flip chart which were resorting to non-communication and/or power plays. To learn how to defuse potentially explosive encounters, all students experienced the Pop Game, a role-playing activity. Additionally, time-out responses to stop the escalation of anger were rehearsed by all participants. These techniques were listed on a handout that all students received. These exercises helped the students to internalize time-out responses in a frustrating situation.

Month 2, Week 4 Through a video presentation, the

writer demonstrated the dangers of personal involvement in incidents of violence. The video consisted of scenes taped from television news reports concerning violence occurring around the world. Following the 15 minute video presentation, students were given constructive outlets for dealing with similar situations through role-playing in conjunction with a follow-up discussion period. Students also learned how to generate options when conflict occurred. Additionally, they learned how to control anger (Frenza, 1993) and to reduce impulsive behavior. The purpose of this exercise was to strengthen the students' skills in finding other ways to deal with stressful situations. At the end of this exercise, the skills and knowledge gained in the past month were reviewed. Additionally, the upcoming month was previewed.

Month 3, Week 1 The writer initiated discussion by presenting an overview of the five steps of conflict management: identifying the conflict, asking permission to be involved (sometimes this step needs to be deleted), identifying facts and feelings using "I" messages, coming to an agreement or compromise, and establishing a time period to evaluate agreement. The writer also introduced the six steps (Carter, 1993) of mediation: "introduction, telling the story, identifying facts and feelings, generating options, agreement and following up." In addition, students were asked to write letters to each

member of their families which would focus on three items: "what you mean to me"; "a good moment that we shared"; "a statement of appreciation." These letters were mailed home, and parents were notified of their impending arrival and asked to write similar letters to their children, which could be shared during the Thanksgiving holiday.

Month 3, Week 2 To address the issues of gun safety and gun control, the writer initiated an interactive exercise and discussion to demonstrate the number of students in that particular class who potentially could be victims (fatalities) of gun violence in relation to this age group in the general population. This allowed the students to visualize the impact gun violence could have in their own lives. Following this demonstration, the entire group participated in a discussion of their own personal exposure to guns and their own reactions to those situations.

As follow-up to the shared letter exercise, the students reported their parents' reactions, which were overwhelmingly positive; the students also communicated their initial feelings of discomfort when they listened to their parents read complimentary letters aloud.

Month 3, Week 3 The writer introduced Mohandas Gandhi's and Martin Luther King's philosophies of non-violence through a video presentation. After viewing the video, the students discussed what emotional position

Gandhi and King had taken, based upon a handout given to them. These emotional positions were presented in the handout: Emotional Position 1, "I will act the way I feel"; Emotional Position 2, "You're going to act the way I feel"; Emotional Position 3, "I can't help the way I feel, but I can help the way I think and act." The students then applied these three emotional positions to situations in their own lives.

Month 3, Week 4 The students were given interactive exercises to identify and recognize their own feelings of anger and the body language associated with conflict. Role-playing these various scenarios enabled the students to recognize nonverbal messages of other students. Some of these nonverbal messages that were identified by the students were: sticking up their middle finger, making a disgusting face, facial gestures, body strut, making obscene gestures with hands and arm movements. The purpose of this exercise was to have students learn about non-verbal messages. This skill was useful because it allowed students to recognize potential conflict situations before they arise. Furthermore, it is hoped that students will use these skills both in and out of school situations. Finally, a review was given by the writer on the previous concepts (conflict management and mediation), during the third month, and a brief preview of the next month's topic was provided.

Month 4, Week 1 During this week, the writer initiated discussion of effective communication skills. Steps of effective communication were written on the flip chart and discussed. A handout of effective communication was then distributed to all students and reviewed. The steps included: 1) make a positive statement; 2) use "I" statements; 3) state needs and feelings; 4) watch your body language; and 5) end with a positive statement. A review of trigger words/gestures that induced conflicts was addressed. Students divided into small groups and devised a problem scenario and practiced the effective communication skills. Then each group presented its scenario in front of the entire group.

Month 4, Week 2 Guidelines for active listening and reflective listening were initiated by the writer, and small groups role-played specific problems that required these two skills. Students were asked to utilize active listening skills such as maintaining eye contact, acting interested, using non-judgmental body language, and leaning forward while giving their partner feedback with reflective listening. Reflective listening involved paraphrasing the partner's suggested solutions to the problems and then summarizing the comments in a few sentences. These exercises were provided with the expectation that they would help demonstrate a growth in students' awareness of the important listening skills they

could use to decrease their anger and avoid harmful situations within the school as well as in other areas of their lives.

Month 4, Week 3 During this week student practiced role-playing neutrality (non-judgmental listening) and confidentiality in various scenarios in a conflict resolution program.

Furthermore, the writer stated the importance of setting goals. Each student was given a handout to complete targeting specific areas they would like to improve in their life, such as Academic Goals, Physical Goals, and Social Goals. Discussion followed with the writer's providing examples of goals that could be considered under each topic. After completing their handouts, the students were asked to state their goals to the class, and their responses were written on a flip chart beside their names. The students then divided into small groups of four to five members, and a teacher was assigned to each group and helped them develop the essential techniques of meeting their goals by listing the steps on notecards. One of the benefits of the goal setting activity was that it gave the students opportunities to practice active listening skills as well as reflective listening skills while engaging in conversation (feedback) with the group leader (teacher). The goal setting also provided the students with an

opportunity to communicate their ideas with correct body language, eye contact, tone of voice and gestures to communicate the message needed to get their point across.

Month 4, Week 4 The writer initiated a discussion about communicative skills utilizing "I" statements, reflective, and active listening, neutrality, confidentiality, and she also reviewed the past month. Students continued to complete their steps to goal setting on notecards and rewrote them as a final draft. All students presented to the class their responses (steps) to meeting their goals.

Other effective methods toward meeting one's goals were identified, such as: rewards and incentives, student plan book, math peer tutoring, academic hotline, class buddy, and class participation. The purpose of these topics was to provide a list of additional resources that would help the student reach his goals. Finally, the writer gave a brief preview of the next month's concepts.

Month 5, Week 1 The students worked in small groups with an interactive exercise in assertiveness training, using communicative skills. The steps of utilizing assertive behavior were listed on a flip chart, and they illustrated the following: 1) watch body language (power of emotional control); 2) name behavior or situation you want changed (use "I" statements); 3) state needs and feelings (use "I" statements); 4) state your reason; 5)

state specifically what you want done; 6) get agreement or compromise; 7) establish a time frame for evaluation of agreement. Learning assertive problem-solving skills was reviewed and reinforced by identifying, predicting, and preparing for difficult encounters. Assertive responses were utilized to deal with confrontations. The writer facilitated intergroup discussion in reference to the results of utilizing assertive behavior. Some responses were: "it produces less of a chance of being victimized or manipulated"; "it made one feel guilty and used"; and "it met my needs." A letter was sent with follow-up phone calls to parents of students, inviting them to attend the next session.

Month 5, Week 2 During this class session, parents and educators were invited to take part in the topics of the day. The writer initiated discussion of forming friendships and interacting with peers. As a group, the students discussed the importance of high self-esteem to resist negative peer pressure. Also the topics included how widespread peer pressure is and whose decision it is when it comes to actions, thoughts, and beliefs. Additionally, the groups discussed what makes certain students go along with peers against their own belief systems (low self-esteem was a factor). They also discussed assertive ways to say "no" and resisting negative peer pressure under certain circumstances. There

were many purposes for this activity. First, there is a vital link between the adolescent and his peer group as he seeks intimacy and interaction among these friendships and their influence on his behaviors and attitudes. Second, the influence of peer pressure is acceptable, but control is not. Third, the person who should make the key decisions is yourself. Moreover, the topic was addressed that adolescents need to interact with as well as associate with noninstructional adults. While adolescents are able to make choices on their own, they still need clear parental guidelines and parents modeling a responsible lifestyle.

Month 5, Week 3 During this week, peer pressure and peer education were addressed in reference to health issues such as alcohol, cigarettes, and drug use. The detrimental effects of marijuana, alcohol, heroin, and cocaine were introduced through a video presentation entitled "Straight Up." After viewing the video, students discussed various aspects such as what effects to one's body does marijuana have; how long do these effects last in the body; what are the gateway drugs? The writer facilitated this intergroup discussion with a question and answer period. The purpose of this class was for students to become aware of the detrimental effects of drugs as well as reorganize the standard advertising practice of showing the illusion that good looks, fun, and drinking

always go together.

Month 5, Week 4 Part II of the video presentation entitled "Straight Up" was observed. A question and answer period followed, the focus of which was on knowledge leading to good decision making. Additionally, the topics of illusion, perception and addiction were discussed. Furthermore, the students reviewed and practiced communicative skills (role-playing) in reference to maintaining self-control, impulse control, controlling one's anger in responses to teasing, as well as reviewing the past month's concepts and previewing the next month.

Month 6, Week 1 The writer initiated a discussion about where conflicts occur. Responses from the students were listed on the flip chart. The five steps of conflict management were written on the flip chart and discussed. A handout of these steps of conflict management was then distributed to all students and reviewed. The writer provided various problem scenarios of which students role-played the steps to conflict management. The purpose of this exercise was to equip the students with techniques that would help them maintain emotional control in difficult problem situations.

Month 6, Week 2 During this week, the students had intensive practice of the five steps to conflict management by role-playing scenarios in front of all. Additionally, the students engaged in a pantomime exercise

to illustrate body language that portrays an "aggressive, passive, or assertive" position. Next, they coupled these body positions with voice expressions in "aggressive, passive, or assertive" tones. Discussion followed with the focus on what non-threatening dialogue could be used in volatile circumstances. The purpose of these activities was to practice effective methods to problem solving with the intention of having these methods internalized by the students.

Month 6, Week 3 The writer asked the students to role-play conflict scenarios in small groups, targeting a conflict situation they were involved in or had witnessed in this past year. Their instructions were to portray three conflict situations, utilizing the conflict management skills they have learned. The purpose of this exercise was to strengthen their responses and conflict management skills since they would be dealing with real, every day issues rather than the writer's proposed simulated issues. Each group then presented their conflict situations in front of the entire class. Finally, these conflict situations as well as the students' responses were discussed in depth by all students and the writer.

Month 6, Week 4 Guidelines and steps for mediation were discussed, and the past month was reviewed. Parents of students were notified and invited to attend this

session. During the week, a two-part session was held for parents and teachers. These sessions illustrated that the program's format would be directed toward providing an informative program to meet the needs of the students, modifying the students' objectional behavior, and increasing the child's capacity to live in a more secure and loving home. Using exercises and group process, the writer would focus on issues of anger management, stress releasers, child-rearing concerns, community resources, and support systems. Also, didactic presentations, videotapes, and small group discussions would be utilized to address these issues and to maximize the participants' learning of positive coping skills, as well as problem-solving techniques and strategies.

The writer addressed the issue of maximizing the students' learning of positive social and conflict management skills. The writer related the four major components of the Prosocial/Conflict Management Program: a) self-esteem; b) identification of feelings; c) social skills/conflict management process; and d) transference of these skills into the greater community. The writer illustrated how the students were being taught through interactive exercises and group process. A question and answer period followed, and the next month was previewed.

Month 7, Week 1 The writer continued to demonstrate how to resolve conflict while using the steps to conflict

management. Additionally, the writer role-played conflict situation with mediation. Students were given constructive outlets to deal with their anger which included role-playing in conjunction with a follow-up discussion period. Time-out responses that would be a diversion were presented on a flip chart with suggestions offered by the students such as: jog, go for a walk, engage in a hobby, phone a friend, leave the room, read, rent a video, practice yoga, start a project. A hand-out was given to the students as a reminder about time-out responses.

Month 7, Week 2 The writer initiated discussion of positive outlets for stress. Stress releasers were identified and written on the flip chart by the students. The students reflected on stressful behavior and learned practical outlets for stress. A handout, which illustrated the basic guidelines for coping with stress and anxiety, was provided to the students.

These basic guidelines included but were not limited to: recognize and admit stress and anxiety, be aware of body symptoms, find positive outlets for stress, eliminate the "should," avoid stimulants and/or drugs, give yourself positive reinforcement, exercise three times a week, and empower yourself to make a positive change.

Month 7, Week 3 Participants continued to resolve actual conflicts, utilizing communicative and decision-

making skills through role-playing. The writer facilitated intergroup discussion in reference to the topic of building high self-esteem by taking care of oneself through the following: maintain a journal; write a letter; become aware of your attitudes and behavior; engage in a new hobby; pamper yourself once a week; say affirmations at the beginning of the day and throughout the day; begin to exercise; and make yourself your best ally. A handout was given to all students to serve as a reminder and reinforcer of this week's topics.

Month 7, Week 4 Assertive problem-solving skills were reviewed and reinforced by identifying, predicting, and preparing for difficult encounters, as well as the past month's concept's being reviewed. This purpose of the continual practice of these skills was to maximize the students' learning of positive social and conflict management skills though didactic presentations and group process. This process of continual immersion of the steps to conflict management while varying the style of presentation provided the students with optimal opportunities to internalize these problem-solving skills. At the end of this session, the writer previewed the next month's concepts of transference of prosocial skills/conflict management process into their community.

Month 8, Week 1 The writer facilitated students' transference of prosocial/conflict management skills in

the greater community, and in addition provided activities that celebrated diversity, taught about differences, and led to an awareness of underlying commonalties. On a flip chart, the writer elicited responses from the students concerning favorite foods. The ethnic origin of each food item was identified. The purpose of this exercise was to have students become aware of and appreciate their own cultural and ethnic background, as well as instilling respect and appreciation of other cultural groups.

Month 8, Week 2 To promote an awareness and an appreciation of ethnic diversity in the larger metropolitan area, the writer arranged a field trip to an ethnic bakery and restaurant. The tour of the factory provided the students with knowledge of the manufacturing process as well as recognition of the benefits of positive influences of living in a multicultural society.

Month 8, Week 3 The writer facilitated intergroup discussion through small group sessions concerning the value of contributing to their community as a lifelong goal. The writer facilitated the discussion by asking the students to identify ways in which they can participate in their various roles within their communities. Opportunities that would require individuals participating within their community were listed on the flip chart by students' responses. Additionally, they were asked to recognize ways to improve or enhance the community in

which we live. Further, resources were listed on the flip chart for the students to contact, so students can become involved in their communities.

Month 8, Week 4 An informal, group experience with the participants focused on how to incorporate the pro-social skills/conflict management techniques into their everyday lives. Additionally, students were given a questionnaire at the end of the implementation period to determine if their violent responses to problem-solving situations had been reduced. The writer also administered a survey to the teachers at the end of the implementation period to determine any positive change in their perceptions of the occurrences of violent altercations and disciplinary problems. Concurrently, the writer consulted with the multidisciplinary team to evaluate the program's results. All participants were informed either during an informal meeting or by teleconferencing the evaluation results of the prosocial skills/conflict management program.

Unexpected Events and Roadblocks

Unexpected events encompassing teachers, parents, and students occurred during the implementation period. One teacher suggested giving the class a positive name; the writer agreed, and "Adventures in Choices" was created.

In response to parents' interests and requests, the writer held an additional class which involved parents in the classroom with their children. In one session focusing on goal setting, one parent offered an unexpected source of motivation to the students by sharing how, despite her age, she set the goal of graduating from college and was achieving it. Students learned from her experience that goal-setting was a life long process.

Another event, which happened at the beginning of the program, consisted of some of the students refusing to sit next to certain other students when asked to sit in a circle. The writer agreed to let the students sit in the order they wanted, allowing them some latitude in making their own decisions. The writer thought if the students felt as if they had some choice, the overall environment would be more relaxed, and the students would feel less inhibited and more receptive to the benefits of the program.

Other unexpected situations between students occurred, sometimes even before the class began. At the beginning of the program, as soon as the writer entered the room, some students would alert the writer that other students had insulted them or used vulgar language. After these incidents the writer was hyper-vigilant as soon as she came in, in order to quell the escalation of any potential conflicts.

On one occasion, the writer came into the classroom and saw two students facing one another, yelling, about to engage in a physical altercation. Initially, the writer decided to defuse the conflict by diverting their attention away from the argument, but she also realized that it was imperative to address the issues which had led to such an explosive exchange. The writer stepped between the students to physically separate them and diverted one of the student's attention by asking him if he would like to help pass out donuts to the class. The writer made a mental note not to dismiss the confrontation by discussing conflict management skills during that class, even though it was not on the schedule. Boundaries were discussed during that class period as well as skills students could utilize to be assertive without being physically aggressive.

This unexpected confrontation and the writer's unplanned discussion to deal with the confrontation marked the beginning of a trend with handling unexpected behavior. When any conflicts or issues unexpectedly emerged during a session, the writer felt it was best to modify the program in order to address the issue. To dismiss issues of conflicts and go on with the planned program would have been to waste a rare opportunity to link conflict management skills to real, pressing conflicts. This linking of the real conflict stimulus to

an appropriate response was more effective than any role-playing or simulations because of two factors: (1) the linking of appropriate behavior was immediate, making reinforcement more effective; and (2) the issues were important to the students because they reflected real conflicts, which in turn made the learned skills relevant and thus memorable for the students. Skills can only be utilized if they are remembered, and the more important, colorful and real a situation is, the easier it is for the appropriate skill to be converted into long term memory. Ultimately, because of these reasons, the writer felt that it was essential to address the students' issues, and not only her planned address.

Another unexpected circumstance began when a fourteen-year-old student whom the writer will call Jason sat at a table far away from everyone else during a goal setting session. We had split into two groups, and the writer asked Jason if he would join one group, but he only moved a little closer, so the writer had to ask him again. At first, he seemed very withdrawn and didn't want to talk about goals. The writer left him until last, and at that point he said that he wasn't interested in anything and that he was going to run away. The writer told him that we would all come to find him, to which he yelled, "Well, I'll take on all of you!" "Jason," the writer replied, "We wouldn't want to fight you, we'd just want to be with

you." Jason then looked sad and said that he wished he was smart. The writer told him that he is smart but that he just didn't do the work necessary to get the grades. Jason then told us that his dad said that all Jason would be was a "drive-by shooter," to which the writer affirmed that was not what he was going to be, and that the writer wouldn't let him. At this point Jason grew receptive to a more positive future and asked the writer how much it would cost to go to military school. He told me that he heard that they helped you at military school and if I had connections and could get him information on military school. He gave me his parents' phone number and asked me what I felt about military school. Knowing that his mother was in prison and his father had been cited by the court three times for child abuse, the writer replied, "You know what Jason, that sounds like a good idea."

An unanticipated school policy also caused the writer to take unexpected measures. When certain students were excluded from the class because of the school's ISD (In School Detention) policy, the writer felt it necessary that they be included in some way because these were students who probably were the ones who most needed the skills taught by the program. The writer talked to them individually about the program, gave them additional handouts, and asked them to make a concrete effort to be in future classes, to which they responded positively.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

It has been demonstrated that middle school students in urban settings react to and handle conflict situations with violent behavior. This violence is often encouraged by their peers. Such violent responses affect the well-being and safety of all middle school students. Evidence of a problem was gathered by the writer using several preliminary instruments. The students were given a preliminary questionnaire asking them about specific violent behaviors. The results indicated that a majority of the students were aware of and participating in violent and disruptive behaviors in the school. Additionally, most of the students were unaware of methods for effectively dealing with these behaviors (see Tables 1-5 for complete results).

A two-component program was used to address this conflict problem: 1) a model prosocial skills/conflict management program to students and 2) a 2-hour community workshop given to educators and parents. Students were also given a separate pretest to gauge their knowledge of necessary conflict resolution skills (see Appendix D).

This pretest consisting of five items was given again after the prosocial skills/conflict management program to assess knowledge gained through participation in the program.

Additional data were gathered from the teachers using a preliminary survey to assess their knowledge of ways to help resolve conflict (see Tables 6-9 for complete results of the survey). The teachers were also given a second pretest to assess their knowledge of conflict management skills they possessed to the implementation of the pro-social skills/conflict management program.

To measure the outcomes of the prosocial skills/conflict management program, a post-test was given to both teachers and students at the end of the 8-month period. An increase in knowledge was anticipated regarding conflict resolution in the student and teacher groups. Post-test measures were compared to pre-test measures to observe any change.

The following expected outcomes were confirmed by the data collected (see Appendix D for individual items).

1. It was expected that at least 50 of the 60 students would be able to list five basic feelings across various situations as indicated on the student post-test by correctly completing item 1. Fifty-two of the 60 students were able to list five basic feelings. Three students listed only four feelings and five students were

able to list only three basic feelings.

2. Prior to the start of the program, the writer expected at least 50 of the students would demonstrate a knowledge of positive listening skills as indicated on the student post-test by correctly listing five of these skills in response to item 2. Fifty-four of the students listed five positive listening skills. Four of them listed four skills and two students listed three skills.

3. It was anticipated before the start of the program that at least 55 of the 60 students would understand the steps to conflict resolution by listing correctly four out of five of these steps in response to item 3 of the student post-test. All 60 of the students were able to list at least four of the five steps. Forty-five of the students were able to list all five steps.

4. Prior to the start of the program, it was expected that at least 55 of the 60 students would demonstrate an understanding of non-verbal messages by correctly listing five such messages in response to item 4 on the student post-test. Fifty-seven students correctly listed five non-verbal messages and three students listed four such messages.

5. It was expected that at least 50 of the 60 students would correctly list five outlets for stress in response to item 5 on the student post-test. Fifty-two students were able to list five outlets for stress. Four

students listed four outlets, and four students listed three outlets for stress.

Expected outcomes regarding teachers were confirmed by the data as follows (see Appendix E for individual items).

1. It was anticipated that all 10 of the teachers would have an understanding of the reasons students fight by listing three reasons for fighting in response to item 1 on the teacher post-test. All 10 teachers listed at least three reasons for students fighting.

2. Prior to the start of the program, it was expected that all 10 of the teachers would have an understanding of conflict resolution by listing four of the five steps in response to item 2. All 10 teachers were able to list at least four steps.

3. The writer hoped that all 10 teachers would be able to list three positive listening skills in response to item 3. Seven teachers listed four positive listening skills, and two teachers listed three skills, and one teacher listed five skills.

4. It was expected that 10 teachers would be able to list five conflict management skills in response to item 4. Nine of 10 teachers correctly listed five of these skills and one teacher listed four.

The following tables present pre- and post-test scores on the items given to students.

Table 1

Item 1	Number of Students in each Correct Response Category						
List five basic	0	1	2	3	4	5	
feelings across	0	0	0	5	3	52	Post-test
various	4	10	22	20	2	2	Pre-test
situations							

Prior to the start of the program, only two students were able to list five basic feelings; after the program 52 students correctly listed five basic feelings. The increase of 84% indicates that there was a significant change in the knowledge of the students participating in the program. Additionally, while more than half the students were unable to list more than three basic feelings before the program began, almost all of the students were able to do so after the program ended.

Table 2

Item 2	Number of Students in each Correct Response Category						
List five	0	1	2	3	4	5	
positive	0	0	0	2	4	54	Post-test
listening	14	7	19	25	3	1	Pre-test
skills							

Before the conflict management program, only one of the students was able to list five positive listening skills. At the end of the program, 54 students correctly listed five skills, and increase of 88%. This demonstrates an awareness on the part of the students to positive listening skills. At the beginning of the program, only four students could list at least four listening skills. After the program, 58 students were able to list at least four of these skills.

Table 3

Item 3	Number of Students in each Correct Response Category						
List four out of	0	1	2	3	4	5	
the five steps	0	0	0	0	15	45	Post-test
to conflict	16	20	17	5	2	0	Pre-test
resolution							
skills							

The third item asked students to list four of five conflict management steps. Before the program began, 45 students correctly listed all five steps and 15 students listed four steps. This was an increase of 99% which clearly shows a gain in knowledge. Before the program

began, only two students were able to list more than three of the steps. At the end of the program, all students were able to list at least four steps to conflict resolution.

Table 4

Item 4	Number of Students in each Correct Response Category						
List five	0	1	2	3	4	5	
nonverbal	0	0	0	0	3	57	Post-test
messages of	8	12	14	12	2	2	Pre-test
others							

At the beginning of the conflict resolution program, only two students were able to list five nonverbal messages. After the program, 57 students were able to do so. This increase of 92% indicates that students gained knowledge of nonverbal messages through participation in the program. Prior to the start of the program, only four of the students were able to correctly list at least four nonverbal messages. After the program, all 60 students were able to list at least four of these messages.

Table 5

Item 5	Number of Students in each Correct Response Category						
Identify five	0	1	2	3	4	5	
outlets for	0	0	0	4	4	52	Post-test
stress	10	8	30	7	5	0	Pre-test

After participation in the conflict management program, 52 of the students were able to identify five outlets for stress. Before the program began, no student could list all five. The increase of 87% demonstrates a significant gain in knowledge. Additionally, only 12 of the students were able to correctly list at least three outlets for stress before they had participated in the program. After the conclusion of the program, all 60 students were able to list at least three outlets for stress.

The following tables and discussion present pre- and post-test scores on the items given to teachers.

Table 6

Item 1	Number of Teachers in each Correct Response Category						
List three	0	1	2	3	4	5	
underlying	0	0	0	2	7	1	Post-test
reasons why	0	2	3	2	3	0	Pre-test
students fight							

Prior to the start of the conflict resolution program, only five of the teachers were able to list three reasons why students fight. At the conclusion of the program, two teachers listed three reasons, seven teachers listed four reasons, and one teacher listed five reasons. All 10 teachers were able to list at least three reasons why students fight. This increase of 50% clearly shows that teachers were more aware of the reasons for students fighting at the end of the program.

Table 7

Item 2	Number of Teachers in each Correct Response Category						
List four of	0	1	2	3	4	5	
the five steps	0	0	0	0	6	4	Post-test
to conflict	0	2	2	1	3	2	Pre-test
resolution							

Before participating in the program, only five teachers were able to list at least four of the five steps to conflict resolution. At the end of the program six of the teachers correctly listed four steps and four of the teachers listed all five. This was an increase of 50% and demonstrates that teachers did increase their knowledge of conflict resolution which they should be able to apply in their schools.

Table 8

Item 3	Number of Teachers in each Correct Response Category						
Identify 3	0	1	2	3	4	5	
positive	0	0	0	2	7	1	Post-test
listening	0	2	3	1	3	1	Pre-test
skills							

Prior to beginning the program, only five of the teachers were able to list at least three positive listening skills. After completing the program, two teachers listed three skills, seven teachers listed four skills, and one teacher listed all five skills. This increase of 50% is evidence that the teacher learned positive listening skills which are useful in conflict resolutions.

Table 9

Item 4 Number of Teachers in each Correct Response Category							
List 5 conflict	0	1	2	3	4	5	
management	0	0	0	0	1	9	Post-test
skills you would	0	3	4	1	0	2	Pre-test
apply in individual							
or group situations							

Before the program, only two teachers were able to list five conflict management skills. After the program, nine of the 10 teachers correctly listed five of these skills. The increase of 70% shows that teachers learned conflict management skills which will be useful in the resolution of conflict in students.

Discussion

In general, the outcome of the program was to increase students' and teachers' knowledge and awareness regarding conflict resolution. This overall objective was measured by comparing pre- and post-test scores. For each of the items on the pre- and post-test, a significant increase was seen in the post-test results.

In reference to the first item of the students' post-

tests, more students than expected answered correctly. Therefore, the results exceeded the anticipated outcome. This indicates that students became more aware of basic feelings across situations through their participation in the conflict management program.

Specific responses include some of the following:

"angry when my parents yell at me"

"I was scared when my parents didn't come up till 4:00 in the mornin."

"I was embarrassed and got mad at my teacher when she gave me my grades; I got all F's on my report card."

"I felt happy when I took $20 out of my mom's purse; I got candy and gave my sister $1."

"I was happy when I got an A on my history test."

"I am afraid when they say their goin to jump me."

These responses clearly indicate an understanding of these basic feelings, and this understanding will assist the students in decreasing the number of potentially harmful situations that they may encounter in the schools. Additionally, students should be able to carry these skills over into other facets of their lives, which may help them at home or in social situations outside of school.

Regarding the second item of the students' tests, more students than expected were able to list five positive listening skills, which indicates that the outcome for this item was met. This evidence shows that students did increase their knowledge of listening skills, and this will help them defuse potentially volatile situations. Some of the listening skills listed by the students include:

"look at him"
"don't always talk, so we hear each other"
"lean forward"
"understand what they're saying"
"don't always judge, just listen to them"
"I learned to pay attention when the teacher's talking to get better grades."

These responses demonstrate a growth in students' awareness of the important listening skills they could use to help others decrease their anger and avoid harmful situations. Again, it is hoped that students could use these skills outside of the school situations and in other aspects of their lives.

In reference to the third item of the students' test, more students than expected were able to list at least four of the five steps to conflict resolution; therefore,

the objective for this item was achieved. This data show that students were more knowledgeable about the steps to conflict resolution after participating in the program. This is a very important skill because it is directly linked to defusing potentially harmful situations in which the students may find themselves both in and out of schools.

Some of their specific responses which encompass steps to conflict resolution were:

"I got the story out"
"You gotta tell him my story"
"watch body position"
"what's your feelings"
"How you feel in my shoes"
"say I statements not you"
"There more than one way to stop fighting"

The responses to this item which stress clear communication are the most important for implementing the skills learned in the conflict resolution program. This knowledge gained by the students is essential in decreasing the number of violent incidences in the schools.

In the fourth item of the student post-test, more students than expected correctly listed five non-verbal

messages. Therefore, the objective for this item was achieved. The results show that students learned about non-verbal messages after participating in the program. This skill is useful because it will allow students to recognize potential conflict situations before they arise. It is hoped that students will use these skills both in and out of school situations.

Some of the students' specific responses listing non-verbal messages were:

"He was shaking his head at me."
"She was pointin at me."
"They were gonna jump me."
"Man, you ain't be dissin me."

The responses to this item demonstrate that students understand non-verbal messages. They can apply this understanding toward conflict resolution.

In reference to the fifth item of the student test, more students than expected were able to list five outlets for stress. The objective for this item was met. The data show that students increased their knowledge about outlets for stress after participating in the conflict resolution program. This knowledge helps students defuse potentially volatile situations. Some of their specific responses to this item were:

"get on the phone"

"play my music"

"listen to Dre"

"just get out of there till I cool down"

"go for a walk"

"play my drums"

These responses clearly indicate that students have an understanding of outlets for stress. It is expected that they would be able to use this knowledge inside the schools and in other environments to reduce the potential for conflict.

The results of the teachers' tests clearly show teachers' conflict management skills were enhanced after participation in the program. According to item 1 of the teachers' test, it was expected that all 10 of the teachers would be able to list their reasons why students fight; therefore this object was met. The data show that teachers were more knowledgeable of the reasons for student fighting after the conflict resolution program.

Some of the responses to this item were:

"Discord in the home is carried into the school environment."

"A lack of problem-solving skills exists."

"There is so much anger that is channeled into confrontations."

"The focus should be the source of this anger."

"peer pressure to escalate the fights"

"high emotionality and impulse among adolescents"

These responses indicate that teachers have an awareness of why students fight. This awareness is an important first step for reducing potentially conflicting situations.

Regarding the second item on the teachers' tests, it was expected that all 10 of the teachers would be able to list at least four steps to conflict resolution. The objective for this item was met. These steps are crucial for halting the escalation of violence among children in the schools.

Some of the specific responses the teachers made to this item include:

"identifying the issue or problem"

"permission to intervene-can we talk about this"

"utilize 'I' statements, watching neutral body language"

"hearing both sides of the story, issue or problem"

"generating options, coming to an agreement"

The responses to this item are probably the most important for controlling violent behavior in the schools. This knowledge on the part of the teachers will prove very useful in the schools.

In response to the third item of the teachers' tests, it was expected that all 10 could list at least three positive listening skills, and this objective was met. The data show the teachers were more aware of these important listening skills after participating in the conflict resolution program.

Some of their responses were:

"non-judgmental listener"

"body position neutral"

"Maintain eye contact"

"Be open and relaxed"

"If sitting, lean forward, act interested"

These responses clearly show that teachers had a grasp of positive listening skills which are crucial in the resolution of conflict situations.

In response to item 4, it was expected that all 10 teachers would be able to list five conflict management skills. Only nine teachers were able to list all five and one teacher listed four. The objective for this item was not met, although there was a significant increase in the number of individuals who could list five conflict management skills.

Some of the specific responses were:

> "acknowledge the person's feelings without agreeing or disagreeing"
>
> "have each person state their story"
>
> "ask the who, what, where, when, and how questions to help the student get started"
>
> "summarize the stories using active and reflective listening skills"
>
> "utilize role reversal to communicate as if they were each other"
>
> "generate options and have disputants finalize their agreement in their exact words"

Knowledge of these five conflict management skills are necessary for resolving conflict among students. The teachers obviously demonstrated that their knowledge of these skills increased after their participation in the program. The writer feels this understanding of the reasons why students fight would help teachers eliminate some of the causes. However, how long the positive effects last needs to be examined.

The ability of a program to maintain its positive effects is an essential indicator of its lasting value. Therefore, maintenance must be an integral component in the prosocial skills/conflict management program. An effective maintenance strategy consists of students self-evaluating their actions (through a personal diary or other means), which encourages them to actively contemplate their own behavior. This self-recording and

evaluation encompass the process of reactivity where increased awareness may lead to a change in the deviant behavior (Forman, 1993).

Other effective maintenance strategies include making the skills that the students learned familiar through memorable role-playing activities in a wide variety of situations. Booster sessions, scheduled monthly or after an event that is often stressful for the students, serve to maintain learned skills through review, support and discussions concerning difficulties or failure to use the skills (Forman, 1993). The aim of these various maintenance strategies is to ensure that the program will not merely have a transient effect on the students, but instead build a lasting foundation of skills that students can confidently rely on in stressful situations (Forman, 1993; Hechinger, 1992; Prothrow-Stith, 1991; Dworetzky, 1991).

These maintenance strategies must be monitored and evaluated in order to access their effectiveness and identify if a need exists to modify the maintenance process (Forman, 1993). Longitudinal, longitudinal-sequential, and other program designs support the need for an ongoing evaluation of subjects (Berk, 1993). Furthermore, in a survey of over 100 different successful intervention programs, the importance of "continuous" evaluation was a common component of the program (Dryfoos,

1990). Clearly the need for monitoring and evaluation of maintenance strategies is well documented (Forman, 1993, Dryfoos, 1990, Berk, 1993, Dwortezky, 1991).

The implications of the prosocial skills/conflict management program are necessary components of the efforts to decrease youth violence. Immediately after the conflict management program, a positive change was seen for both students and teachers. Participants felt they had more control in potentially volatile situations. The important question yet to be answered is how long these positive effects will last. Therefore, the researcher needs to determine how much time will pass before there is a significant decrease in the beneficial outcomes of the conflict management program. The implications are that if the positive results last more than six months, follow-up refreshers could adequately be scheduled at 6-month intervals.

The writer needs to conduct follow-up sessions with the same subjects to identify the optimum time period between the initial program and the refresher sessions. While this program demonstrated positive effects immediately after its conclusion, it is almost certain that the concepts need to be reinforced periodically.

Initially, the writer would propose a follow-up three months after the end of the program. The follow-up would consist of the same post-tests and analysis of these

results compared to the results obtained immediately after the initial program. If there does not appear to be a significant decrease in the knowledge and skills of students and teachers, no further intervention would be required. The writer will distribute the post-tests again three months later and examine the results. However, if the researcher notices deterioration of the skills learned in the program, a refresher session will be designed.

It is important to determine the optimal time between the initial program and any necessary follow-up. There are two reasons the optimal time period must be determined. First, because the program was so successful, it is important to continue the positive results. Second, the program requires an investment of time and resources. Therefore it is hoped that the number of interventions conducted are only those necessary to keep the effects of the program at a high level.

Recommendations

1. The writer recommends follow up at intervals (perhaps at 3 month intervals) for an entire year with the same subjects to determine whether the effects of the violence prevention program are still working. The writer can compare additional post-tests' scores taken immediately after the program ended. The rationale is to

continue the positive effects of the program and to insure that students and teachers are still aware of the conflict management skills.

2. The writer should determine the optimal time period between the original intervention program and follow-up sessions. It is recommended that the writer schedule a follow-up for no more than 6 months after the end of the program. The rationale is that some of the effects of the program will diminish after it is completed. A follow-up will insure that participants renew their skills and knowledge in conflict management.

3. At the beginning of every school year, a one-day program to refresh and renew the principles from the conflict management program is recommended. After the one-day program, another test will be given to students and teachers to ensure a high level of understanding of the ideas presented in the conflict management program. If the scores are significantly lower than post-test scores from the previous years, the writer will propose several more one-day sessions to work on those skills that appear to be weak. The rationale is based on the knowledge that students often forget skills learned during the previous school year over the long summer break. This refresher session will remind and reinforce the concepts learned the previous year.

4. The writer must design a program for new

students and teachers. Ideally, this program would take place at the beginning of the school year. The reason for creating a new program is to make sure that students and teachers not previously exposed to the program will not enter the schools and undermine the efforts made the previous year. It is possible that this program for new students and teachers could be combined with the follow-up program design for students and teachers who have already participated in the full conflict resolution program. The rationale is that students who have not been exposed to the program could be potentially disruptive to the other students. Therefore, they need to be exposed to the same ideas and skills as the other students in the same school.

5. The writer should work with other administrations and teachers to design a program to be used in other settings. For example, the program could be useful in both high schools and elementary schools. Additionally, programs could be designed for schools in other socioeconomic settings, such as suburban or rural settings. A conflict resolution program could be useful in private schools, so that students in different types of schools have contact with each other in out-of-school settings. These skills would be useful in other settings to decrease violent incidences outside of schools.

6. The writer recommends that other school professionals be trained to conduct similar programs in

their own settings. Qualified individuals would include school psychologists and counselors. A state-wide training program could be developed and conducted as an in-service for these professionals. The rationale is that this program should be widely distributed and the most effective way would be to have trained personnel in each school.

Dissemination

The aim of disseminating the results of this practicum is to impart the skills and knowledge learned through the prosocial skills/conflict management program to a much greater population. Rather than confine the program's benefits to a limited locale, strategies must be employed to broaden the scope of the program's reach. The problem of youth violence has grown to be a national problem. Consequently, efforts to alleviate this problem, though beginning at a local level, must permeate the national realm. The following dissemination strategies seek to accomplish this aim of increasing the program's effectiveness by enlarging its scope.

The principle strategy to achieve dissemination is to ensure that the program is accessible by increasing its availability. Availability requires that the program is easily found in a variety of different sources; the more

sources, the greater the probability that the program will be implemented and that its benefits will be utilized in a variety of settings. Thus, the prosocial skills/conflict management program will be available upon request in print, and fliers will be sent across the nation to school boards, churches, and youth centers briefly explaining the program and telling how a copy of the program can be sent to their respective organizations. Furthermore, a newsgroup on the Internet will be set up, creating a forum for youth violence issues, as well as establishing another means to disseminate the intervention program to a wide network of sources.

The program will be submitted in part or in its entirety to the ERIC database. The prosocial skills/conflict management program also will be sent in part to various psychological journals and possibly books for publication.

Through these numerous channels, a full report or other summarized versions can be obtained in accordance with an interested group's or individual's specific needs. After the post-tests' data were gathered and analyzed, the writer wrote a detailed final report of findings, implications and recommendations, which will be available to all participants and other interested individuals. The writer understands that the full report of the practicum including all the data will be rather lengthy and may not

be desirable in such a format to everyone. At the request of school administrators, the writer will also prepare an executive summary of the practicum, briefly discussing the program and its implementation and outlining the results. This summary will be read by more people, and thus the benefits of the conflict resolution program will be available for a wider audience.

In addition to sharing the program in a variety of print forms, databases, and on the Internet, presentations and demonstrations of aspects of the program will also be conducted. Workshops and parenting seminars will be conducted using the intervention program as a focal point. These programs will provide an opportunity for the writer's community, as well as neighboring communities to enhance their parenting skills. Schools, businesses, churches, and other organizations could greatly benefit from such parenting programs. For these groups and others, the writer will suggest the various roles that all members of the community could participate in to help implement the program to decrease youth violence. A presentation at a poster session at the AERA's annual meeting will also be conducted to further increase the spread of knowledge about the program. These various visual presentations and workshops will be available to any of the public or private aggregates who request knowledge about decreasing youth violence.

One of these specific programs to implement the writer's practicum developed when the mayor of a neighboring city personally requested that the writer develop programs for his city's civic center. One of the mayor's suggestions would be to target conflict management and parenting skills, which the prosocial skills/conflict management program deals with effectively.

Another way to increase the accessibility of the program is to present the program to members of the school system. The writer will contact superintendents and principals and offer to present a 2-hour in-service for teachers and school administrators about the program. This could allow the teachers to begin a discussion about the potential benefits of such a program and to decide if they would like to implement it in their schools.

These measures encompass the attempt to create opportunities for the community to take an active role in decreasing youth violence. Through the process of dissemination, it is hoped that communities will be able to identify and then utilize sources of prevention information such as the prosocial skills/conflict management program. The program itself is useless, unless it is actively used.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PRELIMINARY STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

** Please do not write your name on this paper. This questionnaire is only for the purpose of gathering factual experiences for my assignment.

QUESTIONNAIRE

		YES	NO
1.	Have you seen any fights/violent altercations in your school during the past year?	____	____
2.	Have you been involved in any fights this year?	____	____
3.	Have you ever teased, put down or called any student names in your school this year?	____	____
4.	Were your teased, put down or called names by any student this year?	____	____
5.	Were you in a situation that you wanted to fight someone who called you names in your school this year?	____	____
6.	Do you think your school's environment is unsafe?	____	____
7.	Do you know of any student who owns a gun?	____	____
8.	Could you describe 5 basic feelings across various situations?	____	____
9.	Could you demonstrate positive listening skills?	____	____
10.	Could you state the steps to conflict resolution?	____	____
11.	Could you identify the expression of feelings and responding to others?	____	____
12.	Could you recognize the nonverbal message of others?	____	____
13.	Could you demonstrate the steps to use in reaching a positive solution to a disagreement?	____	____
14.	Could you identify outlets for stress?	____	____

THANK YOU.

APPENDIX B

PRELIMINARY TEACHER SURVEY

** Please do not write your name on this paper. This survey is only for the purpose of gathering factual experiences for my assignment.

Directions: Indicate your responses to each statement by checking (x) on the following indicating a yes or no answer.

	SURVEY	YES	NO
1.	Do you think implementing a prosocial skills/conflict management program would teach students necessary skills to deal with conflict?	____	____
2.	Have you had success as a teacher in preventing conflict situations from occurring?	____	____
3.	Can fights be prevented from occurring?	____	____
4.	Do you know the underlying reasons why students fight?	____	____
5.	Have you seen any fights/violent altercations in your school during the past year that were not resolved peaceably?	____	____
6.	Do you think you have a disciplinary problem in your school, in your classroom?	____	____
7.	Do you feel that your school's environment is unsafe?	____	____
8.	Did you observe the students' peer group encouraging a dispute to continue?	____	____
9.	Could you demonstrate the steps to conflict resolution?	____	____
10.	Could you identify positive listening skills?	____	____
11.	Are there any appropriate, out-of-date and/or stereotypical materials in your classroom that relate to sex, race, religion and ethnic background?	____	____
12.	Could you apply conflict management skills individually and within a group process?	____	____

THANK YOU.

APPENDIX C

PRELIMINARY DIRECT OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

INFORMAL CHECKLIST	YES	NO
1. Are there conflict situations on the school grounds that result in an escalation of violence?	____	____
2. Have you observed situations where teasing, putting down and/or threatening of students by other students were occurring?	____	____
3. Do students resort to settling disputes with fights and/or threats?	____	____
4. Do peers often encourage the disputants' fighting?	____	____
5. Do you feel that students often tease other students because of their sex, race, religious or ethnic background?	____	____
6. Do you think that there's a lack of students awareness concerning available resources and support systems?	____	____

APPENDIX D

PRE- AND POST TEST QUESTIONNAIRE
STUDENT

STUDENT PRE- AND POST TEST

In an attempt to gauge the usefulness of the Pro-social Skills/Conflict Management Program, please complete the following anonymous questionnaire.

1. List 5 basic feelings across various situations.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. List 5 positive listening skills.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. List 4 out of the 5 steps to conflict resolution.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. List 5 nonverbal message of others.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Identify 5 outlets for stress.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX E

PRE- AND POST TEST QUESTIONNAIRE
TEACHER

TEACHER PRE- AND POST TEST

In an attempt to gauge the usefulness of the Pro-social Skills/Conflict Management Program, please complete the following anonymous questionnaire.

1. List 3 underlying reasons why students fight.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. List 4 of the 5 steps to conflict resolution.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Identify 3 positive listening skills.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. List 5 conflict management skills you would apply in individual or group situations.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX F

PRE- AND POST DIRECT OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

DIRECT OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

		NUMBER
1.	How many conflict situations on the school grounds that resulted in an escalation of violence have you observed?	_____
2.	How many situations where teasing, putting down and/or threatening of students by other students are occurring?	_____
3.	How many students reported to settling disputes with fights and/or threats?	_____
4.	How many peers encouraged the disputants' fighting?	_____
5.	How often do students tease other students because of their sex, race, religious or ethnic background?	_____